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Fort Stewart-Hunter Army Airfield, southeast Georgia communities celebrate ties that bind

FORT STEWART, Ga. (July 11, 2008) – Seventeen southeast Georgia communities and Fort Stewart-Hunter Army Airfield celebrated the strong ties that bind together the Army community here with the neighboring communities by signing the Army Community Covenant today at a ceremony in the Main Post Chapel here.

Mayors, county commissioners and other local government representatives from Bryan County, Chatham County, Effingham County, Evans County, Liberty County, Long County, Tattnall County, Claxton, Flemington, Glennville, Hinesville, Ludowici, Pembroke, Reidsville, Richmond Hill, Savannah and Springfield signed the covenant along with 3rd Infantry Division commander Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch and Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth Preston. Family members and Soldiers from Fort Stewart-Hunter Army Airfield also signed the Community Covenant.

Hinesville mayor James Thomas Jr. said the covenant signing formalizes what was already true of the relationship between Fort Stewart-Hunter Army Airfield and the local communities.

“The signing of this Covenant officially recognizes what has been a long-term relationship....a relationship that’s stronger than ever because of the many deployments,” Thomas said.

Lynch said that the communities of southeast Georgia are the most supportive he’s ever seen. The 3rd ID was able to make its reenlistment goal five months into the fiscal year while deployed because of the support the communities at home were providing to Army Families. The Marine Soldiers were also able to focus on securing the southern belts of Baghdad and building capacity there because of the communities support.

“They could do that because they knew here in coastal Georgia their Families were being taken care of,” Lynch said. “We could focus on the fight because the community was focused on the Family.”

Preston spoke about several community best practices that have been enacted in communities across the nation to support Soldiers and their Families, highlighting a free tuition program being offered by Savanna Tech as an example. The program offers Soldiers who have deployed an application fee waiver and additional tuition assistance. Programs like those are important because they are what Soldiers and their Families deserve.

“We owe our Soldiers and Families the quality of life commensurate with their service,” Preston said.

The Community Covenant is the formal recognition by the Army and communities throughout the nation of the enduring support communities provide to Soldiers and Army Families. It is intended to continue to foster the strong partnership between the Army and communities to improve the quality of life for Soldiers and their Families, both at their current duty station and as the transfer from state to state. The ceremony at Fort Stewart honors the ties that bind Fort Stewart-Hunter Army Airfield and the neighboring communities.